

BOOK OF RUTH

Taught by Willis E. Bishop
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Prayer: Our Father, as we come, You can see in our hearts that we love to tell the story, and to read the Word as it cleanses our hearts, as it encourages us, as it strengthens us for the day's service. We come with grateful hearts and ask, Lord, that in these moments ahead You will quicken this slow mind, touch these stammering lips and enlighten our minds together as we read the Word. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Harry Rimmer, in a book which he called The Seven Wonders of the Wonderful Word, tells a very interesting story concerning Benjamin Franklin. I'd like to read that.

In the days when our republic was very young and the formidable and incomparable Benjamin Franklin was our ambassador to France, the nation to which Franklin was accredited [that was France] was then in the blighting touch of atheism which hung like a fog over the thinking of the people who had survived the French Revolution. Literary societies of unbelievers were numerous and common. Moved by his quaint sense of humor, Dr. Franklin joined the most prominent of these societies and bided his time.

It was the custom of this group to have each member in turn write a story, read it to the society, and then have the members criticize the production. In preparation for his turn, Dr. Franklin copied by hand the French translation of a book of the Bible. When he was finally informed that his manuscript was to be the next one heard, Franklin went with a great deal of interest to see how his experiment would terminate.

He arose at the appointed hour, and in warm and sympathetic tones read this great drama. When he had finished, he laid the manuscript on the desk and took his seat to see what comment and discussion would result. For a few minutes there was absolute silence as the sympathetic audience sat under the spell evoked by the story they had just heard. Then some members began to applaud and a burst of wild enthusiasm swept the crowd.

When the presiding officer finally stilled the clamor, he said, "Dr. Franklin, that is the greatest love story ever written in any language. This society requests permission to print this, your matchless romance, and get it broadcast to the literary world." Franklin arose and gravely said, "I am sorry that I do not have the power to grant you that privilege. This story has already been printed and given to the world."

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In vast surprise the president inquired, "Where has this story been printed and how have we failed to hear about it before?" With twinkling eyes, the great statesman and philosopher said, "You will find it in the Bible, the book you profess to despise but about whose contents you are apparently so little in knowledge."

The book that Franklin translated into French and read was the little story of the book of Ruth in the Old Testament.

Ruth 1:1: Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled that there was a famine in the land and a man of Bethlehem Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.

You will notice that there is no author given to the book. Therefore, we do not speak dogmatically concerning who wrote it. I am not unduly exercised that I do not know the author.

Yesterday I mailed a check to make a quarterly payment on our income tax for next year. That is because there is a law called "The Income Tax Law." I don't know who originated that income tax law, but it is valid regardless of whether I know who originated it or not.

That is true of the book of Ruth. Even though I do not know who the author was, it is still a valid part of the Word of God. However, the Jewish Talmud suggests that Samuel was the author. Some think that is not correct, and we cannot speak dogmatically about it.

In I Samuel 10:25 we read: Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom and wrote it in the book and laid it up before the Lord.

Samuel was an author of Scripture. It is not our subject, but it is interesting to trace how the Old Testament was compiled. Beginning with Moses, fourteen hundred years before Christ, and ending with Malachi, four hundred years before Christ, we note that those books were written over a period of a thousand years. How did they all get together? There is a clue here. When Samuel finished this part of his book he "laid it up before the Lord." Where was that? There are a number of passages that state that finished books were placed beside the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place in all of Israel.

In II Kings is the story of Hilkiah. After the temple had been closed for quite a while, a good king came along, opened the temple, and sent Hilkiah in to the Holy Place, and Hilkiah said, "I have found the law of the Lord." The manuscripts had been gathered together for many years and placed in the temple beside the Ark of the Covenant.

So Samuel wrote a book. But the last word in the book of Ruth is "David." It seems that Samuel did not write the book because David

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is mentioned. Turn to I Chronicles 29:29: Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold they are written in the book of Samuel.

Samuel wrote concerning David. In I Samuel chapter 10, Samuel had the assignment to anoint David as the new king of Israel. I do not see any reason why Samuel could not have written the book of Ruth and mentioned David in the genealogy that closes the book. Since Solomon is not mentioned in that genealogy, it must have been written before Solomon was king.

It is not really important, but my guess is that Samuel probably was the author.

Back to Ruth 1:1 - when the judges rule.

Forgive me for reviewing here, but you will remember that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt. It took them forty years through the wilderness. They came to the edge of the promised land and God said to Moses, "You can't go in." Joshua took over the leadership and in seven years he led the children of Israel into the land and, at least basically, they settled in the land of Palestine.

After the time of Joshua there was no central organization in Israel. That is the period of the judges that is covered by our biblical book of Judges. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." You almost shudder as you read through Judges and note the terrible things that the human heart wrought in the nation. That period of time extended all the way down to the time of Saul as the first king, around 1043 B.C., a period of three hundred years or more in which there were judges in various parts of the land "taking care" of the business of Israel.

The book of Ruth takes place during that time of the judges. That is sometime between about 1375 and 1040 B.C.

Then in verse 1 we read that there was a famine in the land. That is not unusual in the land of Israel. For example, we read that Abraham went to Egypt when there was a famine, Jacob and his family went to Egypt during the time of famine, when Saul broke a promise to the Gibeonites the Lord sent a famine, and in the time of Elijah there was a famine. And that is the time of this book of Ruth.

These people were from Bethlehem, Judah - verse 1. There is also a Bethlehem way up north in the territory of Zebulun. Samuel was being clear to distinguish the Bethlehem about which he was speaking.

Then, in verse 1, a certain man went to sojourn in the country of Moab. In the Hebrew Bible, the word "sojourn" gives us clearly the intent of Elimelech and his family. They did not go there to settle permanently. Then intended to return to Israel. I emphasize that because sometimes they are misunderstood as leaving their land on a

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permanent basis. That word indicates simply a temporary sojourn as strangers and not as citizens.

Was Elimelech wrong in going to Moab? I have heard sermons and read commentaries condemning him for this move. When he and his sons died, they say God was chastising them because they had left their land. God had given them the land and they should have trusted God to take care of them in the land.

I don't believe that is a correct evaluation of the situation. In the case of Jacob, the Lord told him it was all right for them to go to Egypt during a famine. Elisha told the Shunammite woman it was all right to go into Philistine territory when there was a seven-year famine. Our Lord's parents went to Egypt, under different circumstances, and it was certainly all right for them to go. There is no indication of the Lord's displeasure that Elimelech and his family went to Moab because of the famine.

Now, the country of Moab. On the map in your Bible you can locate the Dead Sea and Jerusalem. About five or six miles almost directly south of Jerusalem is Bethlehem. Then almost directly across the Dead Sea is the territory of Moab. There is quite a bit of history in connection with Moab.

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, they came to the territory of Moab, and Moab wouldn't let them through. They had to turn back and come up on the other side of Moab to get into the land. When they were almost ready to settle, God gave Moses permission to say to Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh, "You may settle on the eastern side of the Jordan River." And the northern half of what had been the territory of Moab became the territory into which Reuben had settled. That would have been the situation in the time of the book of Ruth. Reuben would have already been settled there, so that the territory of Moab at this point would have been only that which was below the Arnon River.

Elimelech and his family must have gone from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, crossed over north of the Dead Sea and then down what is called the King's Highway into Moab. Moab is on a rather high plateau and is well equipped to grow grain and care for cattle. So they left the famine and traveled some fifty or sixty miles, walking, into Moab for a temporary sojourn.

Q. Is it possible that other families also moved but are not mentioned in Scripture?

A. That could be true. Leaving in times of famine was not an unusual circumstance.

A little history of Moab - not a very pleasant story. In Genesis 18 and 19, we find that Abraham and Lot had separated and Lot chose the well-watered plains of the Jordan. The Lord appears to Abraham

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on His way to destroy Sodom because of their sin. [We need to be aware of this in connection with the present problem of homosexuality. God just is not pleased with that.] In Genesis 18 Abraham bargains with the Lord to spare the city if there were 50 or 40 or 30, and finally got it down to 10 righteous. The Lord said if there were ten righteous He would spare the city.

Lot, his wife and his daughters were living in Sodom, and God brought them out before He sent destruction. (You remember that Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Incidentally, in the southern part on the western side of the Dead Sea there are hills, some sixty or seventy feet high, all salt. It is a hot area, the lowest spot on Earth, 1,290 feet below sea level.)

Lot and his two daughters went to live in the mountains. The two daughters conspired together, got their father drunk, and conceived. Moab was born to one of the daughters, and Ammon was born to the other. From these came the Moabites and the Ammonites which figured in the Old Testament.

During the period of the judges, most of the time the Moabites were at war with Israel. But there were times of peace, and the book of Ruth must have taken place during one of those periods of peace.

Again, there is an Old Testament story when David was fleeing from Saul. He took his father and mother to Moab for safe-keeping. It is interesting because Ruth is from Moab and David is a descendant of Ruth.

It is into this territory where the Moabites had settled that Elimelech and his family fled from the famine in Israel.

- Q. In Micah 5:2 Bethlehem referred to as Bethlehem Ephrathah and here it is Bethlehem Judah.
- A. Bethlehem Judah is to distinguish it from the northern Bethlehem which is six or seven miles north of Nazareth. In verse 2 of Ruth chapter 1 it says, "And the name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife Naomi, and his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion--Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah."

Then in Ruth 4:11, "And all the people who were in the gate and the elders said, 'We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and Leah, which two did build the house of Israel, and do thou worthily in Ephrath and be famous in Bethlehem.'"

There are a number of possible explanations, but I think the most reasonable one is that Ephrath was simply another name for the territory of Bethlehem. Ruth 4:11 leads me to that conclusion. This is the territory of Judah, different from that of Ephraim, which is to the north. Some believe these

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were Ephraimites who had moved to Judah. But I don't think is as satisfactory an explanation.

Ephratha is the territory and Ephrathite is the person. The city is Bethlehem of the territory of Judah.

In I Chronicles 2:19, the genealogies, a suggestion has been made with regard to Ephratha. In verse 18: "And Caleb ... [moving down to verse 19] When Azubah died, Caleb took Ephrath ... who bore him Hur." Some think that the territory of Ephrath, or Ephratha, came from those who were descended from that marriage between Caleb and this woman Ephrath. I cannot settle it one way or the other. But I rest assured that in Ruth 2:11 is the territory of Ephratha and those who come from it are Ephrathites.

Ruth 1:1-4: Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled that there was a famine in the land. And a man of Bethlehem, Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, and name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion--Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they came into the country of Moab and continued there.

And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left and her two sons. And they [that is, the two sons, apparently after the death of Elimelech] took them wives of the women of Moab. The name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years.

The marriage of Mahlon and Chilion to two women of Moab has raised some problems in the minds of people. There are several possible suggestions, and I want to present a view or two that are opinions of others and than I will present one which I prefer.

The first opinion is that they were wrong in marrying these two girls from Moab. In order to substantiate that, turn to Deuteronomy chapter 23, reading verse 3: An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation shall they not enter into the assembly of the Lord forever.

There are many who understand this verse to prohibit these two sons from marrying the Moabite women.

There are others, among them Jewish expositors of verse 3, who point out that Ammonite and Moabite are in the masculine gender; that it refers to Ammonite and Moabite men but not the women. It was the men who kept Moses and the children of Israel from going through the land. But many believe it was wrong for the two sons to marry Orpah and Ruth.

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Along with that, we can point out that Solomon made a mistake, in I Kings 11 beginning with verse 1: But King Solomon loved many foreign women--in addition to the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites, of the nations, concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, "Ye shall not go into them, neither shall they come in unto you. For surely they will turn away your heart after their gods."

Notice verse 4: For it came to pass when Solomon was old that his wives turned away his heart after other gods.

Admittedly, Solomon was wrong in marrying Moabites and Ammonites. There are those who point that out in connection with view number one.

Q. Re Deuteronomy 23:3 - my Bible says they are not to serve as priests.

A. That is a possibility. I think I will have time to get to view number three, so hold that question until I come to that. I appreciate your care in noticing that point. Remember the viewpoint that this meant that the Ammonite or Moabite was not to enter the priesthood.

Suggestion number two with regard to marrying the women from Moab revolves around an interesting problem in Bible translation. In Ruth chapter 1 verse 16 (this does not occur in all Bible translations), Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave thee or [notice that word 'or' is in italics] to return from following after thee. For where you go I will go and where you lodge I will lodge. Thy people shall be [again in my Bible the words 'shall be' are in italics] my people and thy God my God."

It is interesting that in the Hebrew language very often the verb "to be," though it has a verb that can be expressed, is not expressed. Therefore, you have to read into the context the meaning that is there. Words that are in italics means those words are not found in the original Hebrew and are supplied by the translators in order to make sense with the verse. But that sometimes gets into problems.

Continuing with the verb "to be," we have "was" (past), "is" (present), shall be (future). [Writing on the board.] Suppose you were reading this in Hebrew, you would have the words "yesterday" and "Monday" without a verb. How would you translate that? It would be "Yesterday was Monday." If you have the words "today" and "Tuesday" without the verb, it would read "Today is Tuesday." The sense would dictate the verb. [The Bible study was on Tuesday.] Or "tomorrow" and "Wednesday" would be "Tomorrow will be Wednesday." How does this apply to verse 16? What did Ruth mean when she said this? I present a possible explanation.

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"And Ruth said, 'Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee, for where you go I will go, where you lodge I will lodge, thy people shall be [or it could be translated "are"] my people, and thy God [is] my God.' The verb is not present in the Hebrew. If Ruth had accepted the God of Israel before she married Mahlon, she would have been married legitimately to him. Not as a Moabitess following their gods, but as a Moabitess following the God of Israel. Did I say that clearly?

It is possible that at least Mahlon did not marry improperly because Ruth had accepted the God of Israel. And Ruth is saying, "Don't entreat me to leave you because your God is my God and your people are my people."

Q. Re the words "shall be."

A. It depends on whether, in verse 16, Ruth is at that point accepting the God of Israel or whether she had already accepted Him. It seems that since the inheritance of Mahlon [in Israel] would go to Ruth, she would probably have had to have converted before, so that when Boaz married her Mahlon's inheritance went along with the marriage ceremony.

It is just a suggestion to say that Mahlon, and perhaps Chilion also, did not marry improperly. Some say that in light of Deuteronomy 23 they had no right to marry and therefore they married out of the will of God. It is interesting that in the account they are not condemned for having married these two women. Or the second possible explanation is that Ruth had already accepted the God of Israel when she married Mahlon.

Another suggestion. Go back to Deuteronomy 23 verse 3: An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the assembly of the Lord forever.

It says "enter into the assembly" - it doesn't say anything about marriage, and some say it refers only to men. "Enter into the assembly," quite probably means that they were not allowed to attend Israel's religious meetings. Or, it has been suggested that priesthood would be involved and that Ammonites or Moabites were not permitted to enter into the priesthood. That could not happen anyhow because the priests had to be descendants of Levi. So I would rule out that suggestion.

Ammonites or Moabites were not allowed to attend Israel's religious gatherings. Therefore, Deuteronomy 23:3 has no bearing on the marriage of Mahlon and Chilion to Orpah and Ruth.

Comment: Ruth is in the line of Christ.

A. A good observation. Ruth is one of the four women in the line of Christ.

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Q. Is a Moabite always a Moabite even if he accepts the Lord?

A. Yes. Someone who is born a German and accepts the Lord is still a German by nationality, but he is a Christian, spiritually speaking. We don't lose our nationality when we accept the Lord, but we do change our spiritual allegiance. This is one of the things those in Jewish evangelism face today. The Jews say that a Jew who accepts Jesus as the Messiah is no longer a Jew. The converted Jews say, "I'm still a Jew but a completed Jew. I will always be a Jew, but I have changed my allegiance to Jesus as the Messiah."

Later on, in Ruth 4 verse 5: Then said Boaz, "What day thou buyest the field from the hand of Naomi thou must buy it also of Ruth, the Moabitess...."

There, even after she names Jehovah as her Lord she is still called a Moabitess.

Some principles in marriage. I think the Bible presents the principle that Christians really ought to marry Christians. "What fellowship has light with darkness?" There are other verses. Common sense dictates it. I believe that is the best principle and the Scripture presents it.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we thank You for the fleeting moments in turning to the Word of God. We pray that as we discipline our own lives, in our own marriages, in our advice to others that we may help them to see the joy of walking according to the principles of the Word of God. We thank You for the story of the book of Ruth, for its upholding true love, and of using a line to bring forth the Messiah. So this day, our Father, may our lives count for You, for we ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Ruth 1:5 and 6: And Mahlon and Chilion died, also both of them, and the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. And she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab how the LORD had visited His people in giving them food.

"The LORD had visited His people in giving them food." I am reading from the King James Bible, and "LORD" is in capital letters. That word in capital letters is a very special word for the Jewish people. That word "LORD" is a translation of four Hebrew letters, and was the unpronounceable name for God. It was so sacred to them that the Jewish people never pronounced that name. One possible exception was on the Day of Atonement when the high priest went in before the mercy seat and sprinkled the blood - and he pronounced that name. For that reason, the specific pronunciation of that name was lost. In their Scriptures, instead of reading that name, they would say the word Lord, which in Hebrew was "Adonai."

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Because that word stood for the unpronounceable name of God, the King James translators used capital letters for "LORD."

A clear example is in Isaiah chapter 6:1: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord" Notice, only the "L" is capitalized. In verse 3: "The seraphim cried one to another 'Holy, holy is the LORD ...'" all capital letters.

In verse 1 there is the Hebrew word "Adonai," which is translated correctly, and in verse 3 it is the unpronounceable name for God, translated into all capital letters, so you will understand the difference.

Some Bibles will not have all capitals in the translation. They will have one of two other names. The explanation is a bit technical. [Writing the four Hebrew letters on the board.] When translators came to those four Hebrew letters, since they didn't know what those stood for originally, and since the Hebrew needed some vowels supplied, they guessed at it. Therefore they came up with two different possibilities.

The first letter [reading from right to left] can be translated either as a "Y" or a "J"; the second is an "H"; the third is either a "V" or a "W"; and the fourth is again an "H." How do you translate it when the two letters could be either "Y" or "J" and "V" or "W"?

Some translators decided to use the "JHVH"; they supplied the vowels and came up with "JEHOVAH." So some Bibles will have "JEHOVAH" where the King James Bible has "LORD." Other translators used the "YHWH"; they supplied the vowels and came up with "YAHWEH." That word is used in some Bibles. So "LORD," "JEHOVAH" and "YAHWEH" represent the sacred, unpronounceable Hebrew name for God.

Q. Why are we allowed to use the word?

A. Because the Scripture doesn't indicate that it should not be used. We still don't know the actual pronunciation, but there is no indication that the word "LORD" is any more sacred than the word "God." We just need to use it with deep respect.

In Ruth 1:6, Naomi understands that the Lord had visited His people in giving them food, so she prepares to go back. She is saying here that God is in control of the circumstances of life.

I hope this isn't too far off the subject, but Ecclesiastes says that of the making of books there is no end. There is another verse that says in much study is a weariness of the flesh, which students at Washington Bible College quoted frequently. It does take some energy to study. Anyhow, in connection with "many books," and there are many available, sometime ago I purchased a book called Trusting God with a subtitle Even When Life Hurts by Jerry Bridges, and I found it to be a tremendously fascinating book. He writes from his own

experiences, though he does not build on those in particular. He makes three points which I found to be very helpful.

The first point he makes is that God is completely sovereign. If God is not in control of every detail of life He is not in control at all. I'm not sure I can remember all of the saying, but it is something like this: For want of nail a shoe was lost; for want of a shoe a horse was lost; for want of a horse a rider was lost; and for want of a rider a battle was lost." The little details of life are in the sovereign control of God. Christ said that all our hairs are numbered; not one sparrow falls to the ground without the Lord knowing it. A number of years ago as I walked in Jerusalem I took a picture of a dead sparrow in the street because that verse came to me so forcefully. When unpleasant things happen in our lives we must not forget that those things come through the sovereign control of God.

The second point he makes is that God is infinite in wisdom. The psalmist said, "His understanding is infinite." He doesn't make a mistake in what He permits. He doesn't misjudge. His sovereignty is guided by His infinite wisdom.

Point number three is that God is perfect in love. The hurts that come into your life and mine are not because God hates us but because He loves us and is in control. I have memorized a little key - CIP: completely sovereign; infinite in wisdom; perfect in love. In the circumstances of life, it is that God, that LORD, who is behind it all. Naomi recognized that as it is said here, "The LORD had visited His people in giving them food."

Ruth 1:7 and 8: Wherefore, she went forth out of the place where she was and her two daughters-in-law with her. And they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD will deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me."

In verse 7 the daughters-in-law went on the way to return to the land of Judah. What does it mean that they went on the way? Possibly they were just going to see Naomi off on her way back. In Genesis 17 and 18, when Abraham stands before the Lord as the Lord is on His way to destroy Sodom, Abraham walks with the Lord on the way. Not all the way but part of the way. When someone comes to see you, perhaps you walk with them out to the car - something like that.

But I think there is a different intent here. Notice in verse 10: "They said unto Naomi, 'Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.'" They were intending to go all the way to Bethlehem with her. But Naomi tries to discourage them. In verse 8 she says, "Go, return each to her mother's house." That was the place for them to go. It was the place where they would be cared for.

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Ruth 1:9 through 13: "The LORD grant you that ye may find rest each of you in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and wept. And they said unto her, "Surely, we will return with thee unto thy people." Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters. Why should you go with me. Are there yet sons in my womb that they may be your husbands? Turn back my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have an husband...."

Naomi said she would have no more sons. She was not selfish. She probably thought in her mind that it would be nice if they went with her, but there was not much hope for them in Bethlehem. Then she expresses in verse 13, "for the hand of the Lord has gone out against me." Apparently she is a little bitter about her experiences and the loss of her husband and two sons.

Verses 14 through 18: And they lifted up their voice and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung unto her. And she said, "Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and to her gods. Return thou after thy sister-in-law."

There is no rebuke that Orpah went back. It was perfectly all right for her to do so. Verse 16: But Ruth said, "Urge me not to leave you nor to return from following after you. For where you go I will go, where you lodge I will lodge, and thy people [now I am translating] are my people, and thy God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me."

And when Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Notice, where Ruth speaks the word "LORD" is also in capital letters. She had, I believe, become a follower of the true God. She uses a form of oath, which was rather common in those days, when she said, "The LORD do so to me and more also if aught but death part me and thee."

In connection with that I will turn to another passage. I Samuel chapter 3, the account of Eli dealing with Samuel, verse 15: And Samuel lay until morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel feared to tell Eli the vision. Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he answered, "Here am I." And he said, "What is this thing that the Lord has said unto thee? I pray thee that thou hide it not from me. God do so to thee and more also"

There is the phrase I am after. So Ruth used a common form of oath in connection with assuring Naomi that she would be with her until death.

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I will read a poem. I don't know where I got it, but I had it in my Hebrew commentary. It describes quite well Ruth's words to Naomi.

Naomi does not know that I shall go with her
beyond the hill tomorrow morn.
She does not guess I shall not sleep again in
this, the Moab land, where I was born.
But I am certain. Orpah may turn back before
her old home fades quite from her view,
But I shall go on until I come unto that
Bethlehem Naomi knew.

In days gone by, where cluster tales she told
of kindly women like herself,
And men like her two sons and husband, gentle,
true, as I had not known men could be.
Again, it may be I shall find a husband who
shall give me happiness,
Such as I knew so brief, so brief a time.

Yet if I must be ever widowed, childless,
alien too,
Yet I shall go unto Naomi's land.
For, oh, her God is kind and great and just,
and those who serve Him are upright,
And I no more in Moab's dreadful gods would trust.

So with Naomi I shall walk until our feet the ways
of Bethlehem have trod,
There shall we dwell till death us part.
Her land, her people shall be mine,
Her God, my God.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we thank You this morning for friendships within families and outside of families in which we are drawn by the love of God together. We pray that we might strengthen those friendships, think of someone today for whom to pray, for whom to do something in the name of the Lord, and perhaps just to be with for encouragement and enjoyment. Thank You, too, for a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, our Lord and Savior, our ascended Lord, our coming King. In His precious name. Amen.

Scripture: In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. Therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you. Therefore will He be exalted that He may have mercy upon you. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all they who wait for Him. And thine ear shall hear a word behind thee saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left."

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, we do thank You for the strengthening of the Word of God in our hearts from day to day, as we turn to

it for admonition, for direction, for encouragement, for assurance. We thank You that you always are aware of our need, and we find in You the supplier of our need. So we come today for just a few moments to turn to a study of the Word. We ask that as we read we may see the working of our great God. For we ask it in the Savior's name. Amen.

I was asked a question which I thought might be of interest to you. Why is Sunday called the first day of the week?

A very simple answer would be that our weeks are based on the creation story in Genesis 1 and 2. On day one God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. On day two He divided the waters above from the waters beneath. The Earth was completely covered by water, and He moved some of that water into the upper atmosphere, creating our heavens. Then on the third day He brought forth the dry land. On the fourth day He placed the sun, moon and stars. On the fifth day He created the air and water animals - the birds and the fish. On the sixth day He created land animals and man. Then on the seventh day He rested because He had no more that He was going to create. So there was established a week, the seventh one of which is the sabbath, or the day of rest.

If God had had more to create, for example, he would have gone to an eighth day and a ninth day, a tenth day, and then ceased from His work of creation. In that case we would have had an eleven-day week, if I may call it that. But God didn't do it that way.

So He finished creation in seven days, and on the eighth day you go back to day one. Therefore, based on the creation week of God in Genesis 1 and 2 we have a seven-day week, and the eighth day becomes the first day of the next week. It is on day one that we as Christians worship, though we should worship every day of the week.

God completed all in six days, rested on the seventh, and then the week starts over again with day one.

Turn to the book of Ruth chapter 1 verse 19: So they two [that is, Ruth and Naomi] went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass when they were come to Bethlehem that all the city was moved about them, and they said, "Is this Naomi?"

In Hebrew the word for "they" is in the feminine, so it is the women who asked the question.

And she said unto them, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara."

The word "Naomi" means pleasantness. The word "Mara" means bitterness. When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and they were in the Sinaitic peninsula they soon were in dire need of water. It is a real supply problem to find water for three to six million people. They came to some water but found that it was "mara" - bitter. God told Moses to cut a tree and cast it in, and it became

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sweet for them to drink. So Naomi is saying, "Don't call me pleasantness, call me bitter (verse 25) for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me."

The "Almighty" - the word "Shaddai" or "El Shaddai" - the most powerful name for God.

Verse 21: "I went out full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why then call ye me pleasant seeing the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has afflicted me."

She went out full - she came back empty, she says. She had a husband and two sons when she went out, she left a beautiful bungalow in Bethlehem and the fields that belonged to them. Now she came back empty without her husband and without her two sons. It seems to me that perhaps she forgot two or three things when she said that. She forgot that loneliness and poverty and humiliation are not always marks of God's displeasure.

I think Job's friends missed that point. When Job was so miserable, with boils from his head to his feet and other things, that he wished he might die, his friends pointed a finger at him and said, "You are in this because you are displeasing to the Lord." That wasn't true at all. I think I can understand, can't you? When things go against us we sometimes wonder about that.

Naomi didn't recognize what she had received as far as blessing is concerned. She had Ruth when she came back. In Ruth 4:15 we read, "And he shall be unto thee a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." So Ruth indeed was a blessing to her, but at the time of her return she had forgotten that.

Then, God's ways are not always man's ways. You know that in your prayer life, and I know that in mine as well. In Isaiah we read, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor My ways your ways," and Paul mentions the "depths and the riches of God in Christ Jesus."

Ruth 1:22: So Naomi returned and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, who returned out of the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

I can imagine that bungalow. It doesn't say so in Scripture, but there must have been one some place. It hadn't been taken care of for ten years. When you leave a home for ten years you can imagine what it is like when you return. They came back at the beginning of barley harvest, too late for them to plant the fields, and they were poverty stricken. That is why, in chapter 2, we find Ruth going out to glean in the fields.

Archaeology has come across some interesting records concerning the agricultural calendar of the people. I will read a brief item about that.

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In the books of the Old Testament, the names applied to the months are, for the most part, derived from Babylon. But it appears that at Gezer they had a series of names for the months based on their agricultural year. Gezer is located about 15 or 20 miles west of Jerusalem, where extensive archaeological digging has been done, and they came up with the calendar of the agricultural year. Though it was broken in part, they could make out this which I will read:

- No. 1 - the month of ingathering.
- No. 2 - the month of sowing.
- No. 3 - the month of late sowing.
- No. 4 - the month of flax harvest.
- No. 5 - the month of barley harvest.
- No. 6 - the month of the harvest of all other grains.
- No. 7 - the month of pruning the vines.
- No. 8 - the month of summer fruits.

The calendar began in October and still follows the pattern of the agriculture of the land. Now that month of barley harvest is the month of March-April, the month Nisan, the Babylonian name in Scripture, and it was at that point that Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem.

A little detour - the month of barley harvest. Turn to Leviticus 23 beginning with verse 4: These are the feasts of the Lord, even holy convocations which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. In the fourteenth day of the first month at evening is the Lord's passover. [The fourteenth day of the first month is passover.]

Verse 6: And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord. Seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. The first day ye shall have an holy convolution; ye shall do no servile work therein. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord seven days. In the seventh day is an holy convolution; ye shall do no servile work therein.

The fourteenth day of the month is the evening of passover. The fifteenth day of the month is the feast of unleavened bread.

Verse 9: And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying, "Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them, 'When ye are come into the land which I give unto you and shall reap the harvest thereof, ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits [that would be barley] of your harvest unto the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you. On the next day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.'"

Notice, there is passover, then an intervening day, and then the sheaf of firstfruits offered before the Lord the day after the sabbath day. Passover, the intervening day, and the day of the firstfruits.

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Put into the pattern of Christ (and that wasn't particularly my point) - Christ being crucified on Friday, Saturday intervened, and Sunday the day of firstfruits, Christ arose from the dead as the firstfruit from the dead.

What I want to point out is that when you have this sheaf in verse 10 that would be waved in verse 11, what is not told us in Scripture but what Jewish records indicate was that on the fourteenth day of the month, that is, on the passover between the evenings, the priests went out across the Kidron valley to a field of barley. There they would cut the first sheaf of firstfruits. That was on the eve of the passover. That sheaf was kept until the day after the sabbath and then waved before the Lord.

Edersheim, the Jewish Christian commentator, points out that he believes this particular activity at the time that Christ was crucified made it possible without objection for Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimethea to claim the body of our Lord. Because, in verse 5 [in Leviticus 23], "in the fourteenth day of the first month at evening," the Hebrew says "between the evenings," what happened was Christ died on the cross between those evenings. It was at that point that the priests had to go across the Kidron valley and reap this sheaf of firstfruits so they might have it for the day after the sabbath to be waved before the Lord. So the priests disappeared from the crucifixion scene. It was then that Christ had dismissed His spirit and Joseph of Arimethea and Nicodemus came to claim the body of Christ without any objection from the priests.

It seems to me that is a very valid suggestion, with the Jewish background of the barley harvest sheaf of firstfruits.

Back to the book of Ruth - chapter 2: And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz. And Ruth, the Moabitess, said unto Naomi, "Let me now go to the field and glean ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find grace." And Naomi said unto her, "Go, my daughter."

I mentioned earlier concerning the apparent poverty of Ruth and Naomi. Ruth suggests that she might take advantage of a law which permitted her to do exactly what she intended to do. Turn to Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy 24.

Leviticus 19:9: And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest [they were not to pick up the grain that was dropped].

Verse 10: Thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard. Thou shalt leave them for the poor and sojourner. I am the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 24:19: When thou cuttest down thy harvest in thy field and hast forgotten a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it. It shall be for the sojourner, for the fatherless, for the widow, that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hands.

Don't clean out the corners, don't pick up the gleanings, if you have forgotten a sheaf leave it there. Verse 20: When thou beatest thy olive trees thou shalt not go over the boughs again [that is, to entirely remove the fruit]. It shall be for the sojourner, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard thou shalt not glean it afterwards. It shall be for the sojourner, for the fatherless, and for the widow. Thou shalt remember that thou was a slave in the land of Egypt. Therefore, I command thee to do this thing.

Again, on the aside. In Luke's Gospel, you remember that on one occasion our Lord was hungry. He came to a fig tree, and even though it wasn't the time for figs he went over to get something to eat. When He found that there were no figs on the tree He cursed the tree and said, "Be dried up from thy roots forever." Wasn't that unreasonable? It wasn't the time for figs, there weren't any on the tree, so Christ cursed that fig tree, and the fig tree immediately dried up. It was only one of two destructive miracles Christ ever performed. What was the problem? I suggest that the owner of that tree forgot to leave some on the tree for the passerby, for the widow and the poor.

Again on the aside, don't make the fig tree Israel. The fig tree was to be dried up forever, and that is not true of Israel.

Ruth 2:3: And she went and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And it happened to come to pass that she lighted on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

In the Hebrew Bible it is literally "her hap happened," but there is no such thing as chance in the Scripture. It is the way we commonly express it, but it wasn't just a matter of chance. It was a matter of the Lord's directing. Proverbs 16:33: "The lot is cast into the lap, but the disposing thereof is of the Lord." What seems to be chance is something that the Lord directs. So it just happened, the Scripture says, that she came to the field of Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech. But it was not just happenstance.

When people visit Israel they want to know where this happened and where that happened. The place where Christ was born is, I think, reasonably well settled. But there is no certainty as to where the shepherds' field was. There is a field run by the YMCA, and you can see a shepherd with a few sheep, and there are some caves. The Roman Catholics have a place where they have built a little dome. There is a third place which belongs to the Greek Orthodox, and underneath a

mound there is a cave. My Christian Arab friend pointed to a very beautiful field next to this Greek Orthodox shepherd's field. It was level and of reasonable size, and my friend said that traditionally this was the field of Boaz, where Ruth gleaned. But we can't be sure that is correct.

Next is what I consider to be a beautiful love story between Ruth and Boaz.

In the first part of Ruth chapter 2 we noted that Ruth had come to the field of Boaz, and in the last of verse 3 we find that Boaz was a relative of Elimelech.

Verse 4: And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said unto the reapers, "The Lord be with you." And they answered him, "The Lord bless thee."

I stop here to say a word about the relationship between the boss and the workers. Today we see workers going on strike, and there is dis-harmony between employers and employees. While they probably will never accept it, the Lord is the solution.

Verse 5: Then Boaz said unto his servants that were set over the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, "She is a Moabitish damsel [or young woman] that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab. And she said, 'I pray thee, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from the morning until now, except she tarried a little in the house."

The reapers would cut down the grain, and then some ladies would come after them and bind them into sheaves, and they would be kept until it was time to beat out the grain. So Ruth asked to be allowed to work along with the ladies who gathered the sheaves.

She "tarried a little in the house," which was probably a temporary hut set up at the site of the field to provide a little relief from the hot sun. She didn't stay very long and was very faithful in following after the reapers.

Verse 8: Then said Boaz unto Ruth, "Fearest thou not, my daughter, go not to glean into another field, neither go from here, but abide here close by my maidens." [Those maidens were the ones who picked up the stalks after the reapers had cut them.]

Verse 9: "Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them [feminine - the maidens], for I have charged the young men that they should not touch thee. When you thirst, go to the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn."

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"The young men should not touch thee." It could be thought of in the moral sense, but I am not so sure that is the intent. If the gleaner was too ambitious and went into an area where she was not supposed to go the young men would shoo her out. I think perhaps that is what Boaz is concerned with. They were to allow Ruth to glean wherever she wished, and she was to go freely to get water to drink.

Verse 10: Then she fell on her face and bowed to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a foreigner?" And Boaz answered and said unto her, "It hath fully been told me all that thou has done for thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband, and how thou has left thy father and thy mother and the land of thy birth, and are come unto a people which thou knewest not previously."

She was very gracious in thanking Boaz, bowing to the ground, which was a normal act of appreciation. And then Boaz' reply. Apparently her father and mother were still living, but she left them to come into a strange land.

Verse 12 (one of my favorite verses in Scripture): "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to trust."

I'll read it in just a little different way: "The Lord repay thy work, and a full reward be given thee from the Lord God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to trust."

I don't think I need to explain that. Here was Ruth, who had come to trust the God of Israel.

Verse 13: Then she said, "Let me find favor in thy sight, my Lord, for that thou hast comforted me and for that thou has spoken to the heart of thine handmaiden, though I be not like unto one of thy handmaids." And Boaz said unto her, "At mealtime come thou here and eat of the bread and dip of thy piece of bread in the vinegar." And she sat beside the reapers, and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat and was satisfied and had some left over.

Boaz took care of her at lunch time. Dipping a piece of bread into vinegar, much like our salad dressings.

Q. re Numbers 6:3 - the Nazarites: "And he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink and shall drink no longer vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink. Neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes nor eat moist grapes or dried."

A. That was in connection with those things which would cause intoxication. The vinegar in Ruth 2 doesn't happen to be the intoxicating kind.

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Comment: We had some men working on a cottage in the hot weather and they would put a little vinegar in the water.

I have never heard of that. I know some put a little fruit juice in the water, and lemon juice. Vinegar is good if it is used sparingly.

They also had parched corn, which was a rather common food. Ruth had some left over, and she used that wisely.

Verse 15: And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves [where ordinarily she would not be] and reproach her not, and let some fall also, handfuls on purpose for her. And leave them that she may glean them and rebuke her not."

"Handfuls on purpose" - he was being very good to her. He wanted to help her and, of course, Naomi as well. She was to glean even among the sheaves, and she did quite well, as we will see later. They were to let her have all she would take, without rebuke.

It is not related to this study, but there is a series of books that some preachers use called "Handfuls on Purpose." They are suggestions for thoughts and messages.

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, we pray that we may have the mind and heart of Ruth to be grateful for every favor that is shown to us by others. And then, Lord, with Boaz, to remember to be kind to those in need and leave some "handfuls on purpose" in our own lives. We realize that we need the help of each other. Therefore, as we work together, with the Lord blessing and being with us, may we show forth the lesson from the book of Ruth. In His precious name. Amen.

Ruth 2:17: So she gleaned in the field until evening and beat out what she had gleaned. And it was about an ephah of barley.

An ephah amounts to between two and three pecks, a pretty good gleaning - they tell us enough for two people to eat for a week. She had a good day's work because of the extra help apparently of all that had been dropped intentionally.

In verse 18: Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. And Ruth brought forth and gave to Naomi what she had reserved after she had been satisfied.

In other words, what she had left over in verse 14 she took home and gave it to Naomi to eat.

Comment: Ruth brought what she had left over to her mother-in-law. There was no waste.

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- A. It is a good idea for children to eat everything on their plate.
- C. Don't put too much on the plate to begin with.
- A. Is it true that the United States throws away enough food to feed the world? There is a good lesson here for us. Let us not be wasteful.

Verse 19: And her mother-in-law said unto her, "Where hast thou gleaned today, and where did you work? Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee." And Ruth told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz."

Verse 20: And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead." And Naomi said unto her, "The man is near unto us, one of our kinsmen."

"One of our kinsmen." In the Hebrew the word "kinsman" is the word "goel" [go-el]. It occurs a number of times in the book of Ruth from this point on.

Chapter 2 verse 20; then chapter 3 verse 9: And Boaz said to Ruth, "Who are you?" And she said, "I am Ruth, thine handmaid. Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid, for you are a "goel."

Chapter 3 verse 12 - Boaz speaking: "And now it is true that I am a 'goel'. However, there is a 'goel' nearer than I."

In chapter 3 verse 13 we do not have the noun form, but we have the verb form four times. The noun "goel" is based on the verb "goel" which means "to redeem." The "goel" is a redeemer, and I read verse 13 in light of that because it would be that literally: "Tarry this night and it shall be in the morning if he will redeem thee, well [let him]. But if he will not redeem thee, then will I redeem thee, as the Lord liveth. Lie down until the morning."

Four times in that verse, the verb form.

Now chapter 4 verse 1: Then went Boaz unto the gate and sat him down there, and behold, the "goel" of whom Boaz spoke came by. [Verse 3]: And Boaz said unto the "goel"

In chapter 4 verse 6: And the "goel" said, "I cannot redeem it for myself lest I mar mine own inheritance. Redeem thou my right to thyself, for I cannot redeem it."

In verse 8: Therefore the "goel" said unto Boaz, "Buy it for thee." So he drew off his shoe.

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And then in verse 14: And the women said unto Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord which hath not left thee this day without a 'goel,' that his name be famous in Israel."

I'll explain all those verses as we go through the chapter, but I wanted to point out the importance of a "goel" in connection with this story. There are also other responsibilities of a "goel" which I would like to take up.

It was the responsibility of a "goel" to redeem property. Turn to Leviticus 25:25: If thy brother hath become poor and hath sold away some [or from] his possession [not all of it], then shall his near kin ["goel"] come, and he shall redeem that which his brother sold.

If a man had to sell part of his property for some reason, a near of kin had the responsibility to come and redeem that if he could.

Leviticus 25:26: And if the man have no one to redeem it, and he himself be able to redeem it, then let him count the years of the sale thereof and restore the overpayment unto the man to whom he sold it. And he shall return unto his possession.

But if he be not able to buy it [that is, buy it back for himself], then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that has bought it until the year of jubilee. And in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession.

The "goel" had the responsibility, if he could, to buy back property which his brother sold of necessity. If there was no one who could buy back the property, it would remain with the one who bought it until the year of jubilee, and then it would be returned to the man who sold it.

Regarding the year of jubilee, Israel had a provision for retaining property (earlier in Leviticus 25). Every seventh year was a sabbatical year in which no farming work was done. Seven times seven of those cycles is forty-nine - the forty-ninth year was a sabbatical year. Then the fiftieth year was the year of jubilee. At that time property was returned to its original owners and those who were servants to other Israelites because of indebtedness were released. That avoided the accumulation of wealth into the hands of a certain few and provided for the return of ancestral lands. The land also was to rest, even though jubilee followed a sabbatical year. The land really belonged to the Lord, and He kept it within families as much as possible.

The "goel's" redemption of property becomes important in Ruth chapter 4 when Naomi has some property that needs to be redeemed.

Q. Re returning the property free.

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A. Provision was made in adjusting the sales price of property according to how close it was to the year of jubilee. [In other words, the purchaser would actually be leasing the property until jubilee, when it was returned to the original owner.] The Scripture doesn't say anything about any improvements made to the property. But Josephus, the Jewish historian, says that improvements were considered a part of the value of the land, and allowance would be made for that. It was a fair deal all the way through.

Q. Re overpayment.

A. In verse 27: "restore the overpayment." If the "goel" came and redeemed it before the fiftieth year there would be an adjustment for any overpayment.

Another responsibility of the "goel" was to redeem a poor brother, as in Leviticus 25, which gives the details. Look at verse 47:

And if a sojourner or a stranger become rich by thee and thy brother by him become poor and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the descendants of the foreigner's family, after he is sold he may be redeemed again. One of his brethren may redeem him. Either his uncle or his uncle's son may redeem him, or any that is a blood relative [that is not the word "goel" there] of his family may redeem him, or if he is able he may redeem himself.

And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubilee, and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him.

If someone was poor and said to a stranger or sojourner, "I'll sell myself to you as a servant," then this near of kin to him was to come and redeem him if he could -- buy him back out of that slavery. In more detail, in Exodus 21 we find that slavery lasted for only six years, and in the seventh year the slave went free. The price that he sold himself for was based on six years of service. But if the jubilee came before the six years were up, he was free on that year of jubilee. This does not bear on the book of Ruth, so we will not continue on this.

Q. When did the year of jubilee start - does anybody know?

A. The Jews had four calendars, and the year of jubilee began with Rosh Hashanah. That is not in January as we know it, but about two-thirds of the way down the year. They had four calendars for various reasons. One was for the time they would tithe the fruit; one for the time they would tithe the animals; one for the civil year; and one for the religious year.

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The third responsibility of the "goel" was to avenge the murder of one of his kinsmen, as an executioner within the law. To escape the "goel," the slayer could flee to the nearest city of refuge. The details concerning cities of refuge and handling of intentional or accidental slayings are given in Numbers 35.

The "goel" was to redeem property, redeem a poor brother, and he was the avenger of murder.

Again Ruth 2:20: And Naomi said unto her [that is, Ruth, her daughter-in-law], "Blessed be he of the Lord who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead." And Naomi said unto Ruth, "The man [that, is Boaz] is near unto us, one of our kinsmen."

One responsibility of a "goel" that we did not touch on is found in Deuteronomy 25 beginning at verse 5. The word "goel" is not used in this passage, but, as we will see in Ruth chapter 4, it was one of his responsibilities.

Deuteronomy 25:5: If brethren dwell together and one of them die and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry outside the family unto a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in unto her, take her to him as his wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

The Latin word for brother-in-law is "levir," and therefore this is commonly spoken of as a "levirate" marriage. If a man dies without children, a near kinsman (Ruth chapter 4 "goel") was to marry that woman. And in Deuteronomy 25:6: It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall succeed in the name of his brother who is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. And if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders and say, "My husband's brother refuses to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel. He will not perform the duty of my husband's brother."

Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he stand to it and say, "I desire not to take her," then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, "So shall it be done unto that man who will not build up his brother's house." And his house shall be called in Israel, "The house of him who hath his shoe loosed."

This part will come to play in Ruth chapter 4, where Boaz, as the "goel," will marry Ruth. So we have two of the responsibilities of the "goel" in the book of Ruth: the redeeming of property and the marriage of a widow without a son. I will talk about those more when we come to chapter 4.

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Though it is not related to the book of Ruth, I could scarcely omit the book of Job in speaking about a "goel." In Job 19:17, Job says, "My breath is offensive to my wife, and I am repulsive to the children of my own tribe."

We won't go into all the problems Job had, but one of his problems was an offensive breath. Verse 18: "Yea, young children despise me. I arise, and they speak against me. All my intimate friends abhor me, and they whom I love are turned against me. My bones cling to my skin, to my flesh, and I am escaped by the skin of my teeth. Have pity on me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me.

"Why do ye persecute me as God does, and are not satisfied with my flesh? O that my words were now written, O that they were inscribed in a book, that they were engraved with an iron pen and lead in a rock forever!"

While we are not about to discuss the authorship of the book of Job, and we don't know just exactly who wrote it, there is one possibility that he may have written it himself because he says, "O that my words were now written."

Job 19:25 (the verse I am after): "For I know that my redeemer [my "goel"] liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And after my skin, this is destroyed, [sic] yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another [or as a stranger]. My heart yearns within me."

"I know that my redeemer liveth." You know that in Handel's "Messiah" that beautiful piece of music is taken from this verse of Scripture. "My 'goel' liveth." And though Job realized he was just about dead, he said, "After worms destroy my body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." He had hope of seeing God certainly, and also of a resurrection. So much for the book of Job.

Ruth 2:21: And Ruth, the Moabitess, said, "He said unto me also, 'Thou shalt keep fast by my young men until they have ended all my harvest.'" And Naomi said unto Ruth, her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field." So she kept close by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest, and dwelt with her mother-in-law.

At the close of chapter 1, they have come to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. In chapter 2 verse 23 Ruth worked in the field gleaning from barley harvest to the end of wheat harvest, and that would be approximately three months, around April, May and June.

Ruth 3:1: Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said unto her, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And is not Boaz of our kindred with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing floor. Wash thyself, therefore, and anoint thee. Put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor, but make not thyself known unto the man until he shall have done eating and drinking."

The winnowing of the harvest. As I was going over this lesson, I couldn't help but remember that I was born in a farm house, and I lived on a farm with my parents until I was in the second grade. I have some very pleasant memories of that farm life, and one of them had to do with the threshing time. They would pull up the steam engine in front of the barn bridge, and the threshing machine was stationed in the barn, with a long belt from one to the other. The neighbors would help each other, and bring those sheaves and throw them into the thresher. Spitting out one side would go the hay into the barnyard, and the grain would go in the granary. I could jump in it and play in it, and it was fun time for me, though hard work for everybody else.

In Bible days they did not have those threshing machines. Threshing was done by winnowing. Let me read from Psalm 1: Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted in the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season. His leaf also shall not wither and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

That expresses exactly how they did the winnowing. They would bring the bundles that the harvesters had gathered to a place where there was a hard surface. Then they would walk the animals around those sheaves, to separate the chaff from the grain. The process pulverized the chaff, and the chaff and grain were in a pile. Along toward evening, when the breeze would begin to blow, the men would take a special fork and toss grain and chaff into the air. The chaff would be blown away and the grain, being heavier, would fall to the threshing floor.

As Naomi said, Boaz was going to winnow at the time of evening, and she advised Ruth to go out there to meet him. And Naomi says to Ruth, in chapter 3 verse 4: "It shall be when he lieth down that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in and uncover his feet [after he is asleep] and lay thee down, and he will tell thee what thou shalt do." And Ruth said unto Naomi, "All that thou sayest I will do." And she went down into the floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her.

And when Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn [or grain], and she came softly and uncovered his feet and laid her down.

And it came to pass at midnight that the man was startled and turned himself, and behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, "Who art thou?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, thine handmaid. Spread, therefore, thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou are a 'goel' [or a redeemer]."

You get the idea. They slept right there on the threshing floor after the grain was threshed to guard the grain from being stolen. And Ruth came and uncovered Boaz' feet, as her mother-in-law had instructed her. Why uncover his feet? Ruth wanted him to waken some time, and when his feet got a little cool he wakened. He turned himself and was startled to see a woman.

Someone might ask if that wasn't a risky plan to have Ruth go out at night and meet a man on the threshing floor? Perhaps so - it depends on whom you are dealing with. We will find later in the chapter that both Boaz and Ruth are virtuous people. Could you or I be trusted under similar circumstances? I trust that our conduct, wherever we are, whatever we are doing, would match up to the virtuousness of Boaz and Ruth.

What are we to understand by the action of Ruth in verse 9 - "spread, therefore, thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a redeemer [or "goel"]." There are several possibilities. For instance, that word "skirt" is the same word translated in chapter 2 verse 12 where we read, "under whose wings thou art come to trust." Therefore, in chapter 3 verse 9 Ruth could have been saying, "cover me with your wings." In other words, "take me under your care, under your trust." Indeed, it is very possible that is what is meant.

I am not very familiar with Jewish weddings, but I do know that the bride and the groom meet under a covering or a canopy. There they make their vows to each other. In addition, as the bridegroom takes his bride, he puts a part of his prayer shawl over her. Though I have checked Jewish sources, I have not been able to verify that this custom is related to the book of Ruth, but perhaps it is so.

There is also another verse of Scripture which might be of some help - Ezekiel 16, in which the Lord is rehearsing Jerusalem's history to the people of Jerusalem, from the time of the founding of Jerusalem, verse 4, "as for thy nativity" to verse 8, when Jerusalem was grown (a figure of speech), to the time of love. Then in the middle of verse God says, "And I spread My skirt [or My wings] over thee." It believed it was a custom - taking the edge of the skirt, or the prayer shawl over the bride.

At least, Ruth was claiming that Boaz should act as the "goel" redeemer for her.

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Q. Why did they sell the bride?

A. It is interesting that we have practically no information in the Old Testament concerning Jewish marriage ceremonies. However, it is true that there was a dowry in which a price was paid to the father for the bride. It seems to have arisen from the practice of the father losing his daughter from his home and being replaced by the dowry, or something of that nature. I don't find anything in the Scripture about that.

C. Jacob had to work seven years.

A. Jacob had to work seven years, and then another seven years.

Q. Could Boaz have performed the services of getting the property back without being married to Ruth?

A. Apparently he could have, although that is not clear. We read in Ruth 4:9 and 10: "And Boaz said ... 'I have bought all that was Elimelech's and all that was Chillion's and Mahlon's from the hand of Naomi. And also [literal translation] Ruth the Moabitess, the wife [i.e., widow] of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife'"

The ArtScroll Tanach Series, a Jewish publication, states, "The act of taking Ruth as his wife was separate from the redemption of the field," and "For the event he [i.e., Boaz] enlisted them as separate witnesses. The acquisition of a wife and property are referred to with the same legalisms, but there the similarity ends."

There were two things: the redemption of property and also the "goel" responsibility for marrying Ruth. The price that was paid was not to redeem Ruth but to get the property straightened out, which was a separate transaction in the book of Ruth.

Ruth 3:10: And Boaz said, "Blessed be the Lord, my daughter, for thou has shown more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning inasmuch as thou followest not young men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, fear not. I will do to thee all that thou requirest, for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman."

Those who don't know the Scriptures very well criticize this account [of Ruth and Boaz on the threshing floor] as being a risque, immoral act on the part of Ruth. But the Scripture is very clear that no such thing was involved. For example, in verse 11 Boaz says, "Thou art a virtuous woman." To see what a virtuous woman is like, read the last part of Proverbs 31. Ruth was that kind of woman.

I point out also that Boaz was virtuous. In Ruth chapter 2:1, it says, "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of ..."

our Scripture translation is "wealth," and perhaps that is the way to translate it. But it is the Hebrew word "chayil" which is translated "virtuous" in chapter 3 verse 11. Therefore, chapter 2 verse 1 could be translated "a mighty, virtuous man." Both Ruth and Boaz were above any moral question in this particular transaction.

Ruth 3:12: "And now, it is true that I am a 'goel'; howbeit, there is a 'goel' nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning that if he will redeem thee, let him redeem thee. But if he will not redeem thee, then I will redeem thee, as the Lord liveth. Lie down until the morning."

I have translated words there by the word "redeem" which happens to be the verb form of the word "goel."

Verse 14: And she lay at his feet till the morning. And she rose up before one could know another. And he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came into the floor." [That was to prevent slander.] "Also," he said, "bring the veil that thou hast upon thee and hold it." And she held it, and he measured six of barley and laid it on her, and [the Hebrew says "he" - some translations have "she"] he went into the city.

"He measured six." Six what? We don't know. The word "measures" is in italics which means it is not in the original. It could be any one of a number of measures. At least it was enough to show where she had been, and he was sending some back to Naomi.

Verse 16: And when she came to her mother-in-law she said, "Who art thou, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, "These six of barley gave he me, for he said, 'Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law.'

Then said she, "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall. For the man be in rest until he hath finished this thing this day."

- Q. Was Boaz a widower?
 - A. We have no indication at all whether he was a widower or whether he had never married.
 - Q. Were they allowed more than one wife at that time?
 - A. They could have had more than one. But it doesn't seem to indicate any place that he was married, and in chapter 4 the other near kinsman seems to have been involved perhaps in marriage and couldn't go into the second one. This was the time of the judges, and there were those who had more than one wife.
 - Q. Re "he" went into the city.

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A. Let me get a little technical. In the Hebrew Bible there is a main Hebrew text, and there are footnotes on different readings. One is called the "kethiv," that which is written - the one in the main text. The footnote is called the "quere," that which was read. The word which was written is "he." The one which was read is "she." At this point, the King James translators decided that "she" was the word which should be read there.

C. I have a footnote in my Bible which says, "or 'he'."

A. The "kethiv" and the "quere" make the difference. At least they both went into the city, so it doesn't make much difference.

Q. About the "veil" in verse 15.

A. That could be translated as a cloak, a mantle, or a shawl. It could be wrapped and carried as a bundle.

Ruth 4:1: Then went Boaz up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the "goel" of whom Boaz spoke came by, unto whom he said, "Ho, such an one! Turn aside, sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down.

You are familiar with the fact that the gate was the place where the people would very often conduct their business. When Boaz called out, "Ho, such an one!" he wasn't swearing at him. Apparently his name is not given simply because he refused to perform the "goel" responsibility lest he mar his own inheritance. Therefore, to keep from embarrassing him the record does not identify him.

In chapter 3 verse 13 Boaz says, "Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning that if he will redeem thee, well." The word "well" is the Hebrew word "tov," and some think that the man's name was "Tov," though the word "tov" means "good" or "well." I think he is simply left unnamed because of his decision.

Chapter 4 the last of verse 1: And he turned aside and sat down. Then he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit ye down here." And they sat down. And he said unto the "goel," "Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land which was our brother Elimelech's, and I thought to inform you saying, buy it before the inhabitants and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it. But if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me that I may know, for there is none to redeem it besides thee and I after thee." And he [that is, the "goel"] said, "I will redeem it."

This of course indicates the financial plight of Naomi. She had to sell her property. This is separate, at that point, from the marriage to Ruth. Boaz said, "Here is some property. Buy it if you will. If not, I'll buy it because I come after you."

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Verse 5: Then said Boaz, "What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, you have bought also [or acquired also] of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance."

Boaz says, "This deal goes together. If you buy the property, you marry Ruth." Because of necessity there must be someone to replace the dead brother.

Verse 6: And the "goel" said, "I cannot redeem it for myself lest I mar mine own inheritance. Redeem thou my right to thyself. I cannot redeem it."

Why did he say, "I cannot redeem it"? The Targum [the Jewish commentary] suggests that he was already married and it would be too much of a burden on him. The other thing was that if he bought the property and married Ruth that property would no longer remain his. As soon as a son was born that property would be transferred to the son and would not remain the property of the person who purchased it. So he said, "I can't redeem it. Boaz, you redeem it for yourself." (There Boaz threw his hat in the air and said, "Hooray, I get her after all.")

Q. Could it have been that this man didn't have any children?

A. It's possible. That might have entered into it. Ruth didn't have any children, though she had been married. How would that be involved? The Scripture doesn't say, but after the near kinsman evaluated the situation, he simply decided he could not fulfill that part of the "goel."

Q. Would it be that only the property purchased from Naomi would go to Ruth's son, so that any other property this man had would go to his own children?

A. That is correct. He would have retained his own property. However, (and the Scripture does not say) did he have to "mortgage" his own property in order to redeem Naomi's, and therefore he might lose it? This is only a suggestion. We have no word about it.

Q. Was this not because in the year of jubilee the property had to go back to the original tribe?

A. In this case they probably were of the same tribe, but it would become the property of Ruth's son as soon as he became of age to inherit it. I have a book about as large as my Bible that deals only with the levirate question in connection with Leviticus and Deuteronomy. There are lots of aspects to it, many of which we cannot speak with assurance. The "goel" just could not buy the property, and he is not condemned for it.

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Prayer: Our Father, we thank You for Your ways in the circumstances of life. As we read through these chapters, we see how Your hand was upon these people for good. And that out of this comes a line what reaches down to Joseph and our Lord Jesus Christ. And so today, we look for Your hand upon us. May we rest upon Thee, place our cares upon Thee, knowing that Thou has redeemed us and will keep us. Give us the joy of our salvation. For we ask it Jesus' precious name. Amen.

There was a question asked concerning the dowery - why was there a dowery given in the Scriptures?

I looked it up in my Bible Dictionary, and there are three possibilities: (1) as a compensation gift from the bridegroom to the family of the bride. [In Genesis 24, Isaac gives to Rebekah's brother and mother a dowery.] (2) It is a gift to the bride or groom from the father. [Terah gave his daughter a city for a gift.] (3) The bridegroom's gift to the bride. [Genesis 34, where Isaac gives to Rebekah silver and gold garments.]

Ruth 4:7 - in verse 6 the near kinsman said, "I won't redeem Ruth and the field because I will mar my own inheritance," and he gives Boaz the privilege to redeem them. Now in verse 7: Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming, and concerning exchanging, to confirm anything a man took off his shoe and gave it to his neighbor. And this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore, the kinsman said unto Boaz, "Buy it for thyself." So the man drew off his shoe.

We have looked at the Deuteronomy passage. When a man refused, ordinarily the custom was that the shoe would be removed and the woman who was turned down would spit in his face. In this case it did not happen. Apparently he had a very legitimate reason for turning it down. He willingly draws off his shoe and permits Boaz to proceed.

Verse 9: Boaz said unto the elders and unto all the people, "Ye are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's from the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I acquired to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of his place. Ye are witnesses this day."

Boaz makes the promise to proceed with the purchase and with acquiring Ruth to be his wife.

Verse 11: And all the people who were in the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman who is coming into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel, and may you prosper in Ephratah and be famous in Bethlehem."

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"Make the woman like Rachel and like Leah." They are referring to the account in Genesis where Jacob had two wives, Rachel and Leah, and from them and their handmaids came the twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel. As there was a great event that came from Rachel and Leah, just so they trusted that through Boaz great things would also take place.

You remember that Jacob's son Judah was born from Leah, and the Bethlehemites were descendants of Judah. They no doubt had that in mind. Rachel was buried just outside of Bethlehem, and they would naturally think of her in connection with their blessing.

Also, Rachel and Leah left their parents to go into another country, just as Ruth had done. You remember that Jacob went North at the suggestion of his mother to escape Easu's wrath. So I imagine all these things were on their minds as they made that blessing in verse 11.

Verse 12: "And may thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bore unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee from this young woman."

"Like the house of Pharez." That is a story in Genesis that I don't especially like to read. But I remind you that is in the record. Judah's wife had died. He had several sons who were disobedient, and in one case he refused to give one of his sons to Tamar because of a Levirate law that was involved, and God took those sons. But Tamar was also a widow, and there was born to Judah and Tamar, by Levirate marriage (I believe you could say) two sons, and one of them was Pharez. The people at the gate who spoke to Boaz were thinking of Pharez, who apparently was the more important of Judah's sons, because he is mentioned most often in the Old Testament records. He seems to have been the ancestor of the Bethlehemites in general.

Turn to I Chronicles 2:3: "The sons of Judah." Then in verse 4: "Tamar, his daughter-in-law bore him Pharez." Verse 5: "The sons of Pharez, Hezron." Verse 18: "And Caleb the son of Hezron." Verse 19: "And when Azubah was dead, Caleb took unto him Ephrath, who bore him Hur." Verse 50: "And the sons of Caleb [names given]" and in verse 51: "Salma, the father of Bethlehem." I Chronicles gives a suggestion that most of the people who were living in Bethlehem were descended from Pharez, a section of the tribe of Judah. We see in Ruth 4 verses 18 through 21 that Boaz himself was a descendant of Pharez. So Pharez played an important part in the thinking of the Bethlehemites.

Ruth 4:13: So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. And when he went in unto her the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.

"The Lord gave her conception." I don't want to read too much into that phrase, but I see two things there. One is the sacredness of

birth. Whenever a child is born, it is because the Lord has been behind that process of bringing a new life into existence. I shudder to think of the abortions that are being performed today. They are forgetting of life. The second thing is that Ruth was married to Mahlon, just how long is not mentioned, but the family was in Moab for ten years. They were probably married for a number of years and there was no descendant born to Mahlon and Ruth. But here Ruth conceives, and I would like to say that there is possibly a miracle in the hand of God on this little fellow who is going to be born.

Verse 14: And the women said unto Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord who hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, and may his name be famous in Israel."

That kinsman is not Boaz but the son that is born. In verse 15 the women continue: "And may he be unto thee a restorer of life and a nourisher of thine old age. For thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath given him [that is, that kinsman]."

I believe this is a reference to the son, who was named Obed.

Verse 16: And Naomi took the child, laid him in her bosom, and became a nurse unto him.

I understand "nurse" to be "foster mother." The Hebrew word is used also of a foster father. Naomi was beyond the age of bearing, and most likely she simply took care of him. "Bosom" could be translated "lap."

Verse 17: And the women, her neighbors, gave him a name saying, "There is a son born to Naomi." And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

The word "Obed" means "servant." I have a Bible that has in the margin "worshiper." That is going a little far. A servant does worship the Lord, but "Obed" comes from the word "ebed," which means to serve.

Q. Why do they say the son was born to Naomi when he was born to Ruth?

A. She cared for him as a son, but more than that, he is counted as her descendant. When Elimelech and her two sons died, the property remained with her and was passed on Obed was born. In that sense he is counted as her descendant and therefore he is called her son.

Q. Could Ruth, as an alien, inherit that property?

A. Yes, she could since she had moved from being an alien to a believer in the Lord. But apparently as long as Naomi was

alive the property remained in her hands, though we do not have any clear direction in the Old Testament. This chapter indicates that she still retained that ownership, and therefore it was purchased by Boaz from Naomi.

Were have a genealogy - verse 18: Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begot Hezron; Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; Amminadab begot Nashon; Nashon begot Salmon; Salmon begot Boaz; Boaz begot Obed; Obed begot Jesse; and Jesse begot David.

Briefly, these ten names appear in I Chronicles 2, and in Matthew 1. The genealogy in I Chronicles 2 agrees with that in Ruth chapter 4, with Matthew 1 being even clearer. As to the spelling, in Ruth 4 verse 20, "Salmon" is actually the Hebrew word "Salmah." In verse 21, the Hebrew word is actually "Salmon." In I Chronicles 2 verse 11 the Hebrew word is "Salma." Three different spellings for the same man.

However, this shows that in those days, even as it is today, there are differences in spelling. The writer of Chronicles very often drops the "h" from a word. In Ruth chapter 4 there is the "h" in verse 20 (which is not in the King James version), and the "n" in verse 21. The differences in spelling do not affect the verbal inspiration of Scripture. These are simply common practices.

Another thing. There are ten names in the genealogies that are mentioned. But, beginning with Pharez, around nineteen hundred years before Christ, and ending with David, about a thousand years before Christ, there are eight hundred and sixty years of time to be covered by those ten names. That probably means that there are some gaps in the genealogy. There are gaps in a number of genealogies in Scripture, for instance, in Matthew chapter 1. These are just the overall important connections between the time of Ruth and Boaz and the time of David.

We can identify most of the people in the genealogies. For example, Amminidab in Exodus 6 is the father-in-law of Aaron, the brother of Moses. Nahshon is the son of Amminidab - I Chronicles 2:10; and Salmon was Rahab's husband according to Matthew 1:5. We move from Salmon in 1400 B.C. down to David in 1000, and there is a big gap without any names.

Why the book of Ruth? Remember these events took place in the period of the judges. We know from the book of Judges that it was a terrible time - "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." The book of Ruth presents a good side of Israel, a gracious, lovely story of families in the time of the judges. I think that is one thing to see.

Then there is the Lord's providence over individuals - Ruth going into the field of Boaz, as it happened; the fact that the near kins-

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man could not redeem her and Boaz became the "goel"; the Lord causing Ruth to give birth to Obed; and the genealogy leading to David in the last verse.

There is revealed the noble qualities of unselfishness, purity, family relations, etc. Then the fact that these people were in the direct line of our Lord. The women mentioned in the Matthew genealogy are Ruth, Bathsheba, Tamar, and Rahab, revealing the grace of God in the lives of these people.

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, I pray that we may have caught a glimpse of the grace of God in the lives of many, in days gone by and in our lives today. May we go rejoicing in the steps the Lord has ordered for us. For we ask it in His precious name. Amen.